



A Christmas Story.

It was only the old, old story
Of poverty, want and care;
Of a room in a cheerless garret—
A hearth and a cupboard bare;
Of a woman, forever stitching,
Whose thin hand held at bay
The greedy, gaunt wolf, hunger,
From her little daughter, Fae.

A little, thin-faced girlie,
In a rickety, creaking chair,
Sat swaying and softly humming
The notes of a childish air.
The coals of a meagre fire
Broke into a fitful gleam,
And the child's dark eyes grew
Thoughtful,
Recalling a broken dream.

"Mamma," she said; "last evening,
When you were away for bread,
Louella came in to see me,
And what do you think she said?
She said 'twas the eve of Christmas,
When all little girls, like me,
Either hung up their biggest stocking,
Or else had a Christmas tree.

"She said that to everybody—
She called him a funny name!
A queer little man, all laden,
With bundles and parcels, came!
No matter how big the stocking—
No matter how tall the tree—
He always had plenty; and, mamma,
She said he would come to me.

"So, I hung up my crimson stocking—
The prettiest one I had;
And I thought, when he came I'd tell
him
I wanted a doll, so bad.
I watched till I got so sleepy!
And this morning I ran to see
If he'd left me the doll; but, mamma,
He never had thought of me.

"I didn't ask for a nice one—
The poorest and least he had—
If he'd left me but the poorest,
Oh, mamma, I'd been so glad!
Then I cried. For, oh, I wanted
The doll so bad! I'm sure
Louella did wrong to tell me
That Santa Claus came to the poor."

The mother laid down her sewing,
In her eyes was a look of pain
For the child who asked so little—
And even that, in vain.
"Shall I tell you a story, darling?"
She lifted her from the chair,
And kissed the grieving baby,
Stroking the shining hair.

"Though your stocking be empty,
darling,
And Santa Claus misses our door,
There is one who never forgets us—
God always remembers the poor.
He knows all our wants and sorrows;
He grieves over every pain;
Though we think him slow fulfilling,
His promises never are vain."

Then she told her the wondrous story
Of the Christ-Child's lowly birth;
How God so loved his people
That He sent His Son to earth;
How he came to us, poor and lowly,
In Bethlehem's manger born,
In the shed where the cattle sheltered,
One long-gone Christmas morn.

How he dwelt with the poor and
needy,
And hungered and toiled like them;
And suffered, and bore their burdens—
This Baby of Bethlehem.
How the world he loved rejected
His love with a scornful pride;

Nor owned him the son of heaven
'Till nailed to the cross he died.

"And this child was a king in heaven—
A prince in his Father's home!
And yet, in the world he died for,
The Savior had found no room.
For the people, so lost, so ruined,
Whose souls he would die to save,
Would give him no kinder welcome
Than death, and a borrowed grave.

"Poor, lonely, despised, forsaken—
Though a Prince of the Better Land,
This Christmas gift from heaven
Was Lord of the heavenly band!
And so, though the good Kriskringle,
Forgetful, should pass our door,
Remember, the Lord of Christmas
Was God's gift to the poor."

The story was told, and baby
In sleep had forgot all pain;
And the shadow of night and darkness
Had gathered about the twain.
The mother kissed the sleeper
And smilingly, softly said:
"My baby must have the dolly,
Though mamma must wait for
bread."

Next morning, Girlie, glancing
To her stocking beside the door,
Cried, "Mamma! See! The dolly!
God didn't forget the poor!"
And she hugged and kissed her treas-
ure,
But her glad heart never knew
That for long the mother purchased
One loaf, instead of two.

—H. W. M.

Christmas Greeting to Our Friends.

To each, to all, to whom The Com-
moner may come this Christmas-tide,
we send cordial Christmas greetings,
and warm good wishes that into each
and every heart and home the Lord
of Christmas may enter, and there
abide; and that the year to come may
be indeed, to them and theirs, a time
of "peace on earth—good will to men."

Christmas Day.

In all civilized countries the annual
recurrence of Christmas has been
celebrated with festivities of various
kinds. In none, however, was it more
joyfully welcomed than in England,
where even still the "old honor" has
not altogether fled. In that country
it was the custom on Christmas eve,
after the usual devotions were over,
to light large candles and throw on
the hearth a huge log, called the Yule
Log, or Christmas Block. At court,
and in the houses of the wealth, an
officer, named the Lord of Misrule,
was appointed to superintend the
revels; and in Scotland a similar func-
tionary used to be appointed under
the title of the Abbot of Unreason, till
the year 1555, when the office was
abolished by act of parliament. The
reign of the Lord of Misrule began on
All-Hallow eve, and lasted till Can-
dlemas day. The favorite pastimes
over which he presided were gaming,
music, conjuring, dipping for nuts and
apples, dancing, fool plough, hot cock-
les, blindman's buff, etc. Various
Christian preachers have taken occa-
sion to remonstrate with their flock
for paying too great attention to the
festive character of the season, and
too little to its more solemn aspects.
The favorite dishes for breakfast and
supper at this season were the boar's
head, with an apple or orange in the
mouth, and set off with rosemary,
plum pudding and mince pies. The

houses and churches were decked
with evergreens, especially with mis-
tletoe, to which a traditionary sacred-
ness has attached since the days of
the Druids.—Encyclopedia Britannica.

The White House Christmas.

The first celebration of Christmas
in the White house occurred on De-
cember 25, 1800, less than three
months after its completion. On this
occasion, the first mistress of the
White house complained of the dif-
ficulty of heating the residence, which
was then denounced as being of exces-
sive size; it is recorded that, on this
first Christmas day the snow mantled
the earth to a depth of over two feet.
During the earlier administrations,
the Christmas festivities were never
very elaborate, although when Thomas
Jefferson was president his grand-
children spent the holidays at the
White house, and there were lively
times among the young folks.

During the administration of An-
drew Jackson, four children made
their home in the presidential man-
sion, and all the traditional festivities
were introduced. During the civil war
there was little jollity in the White
house, though the little Lincolns hung
up their stockings in the time-hon-
ored way. During the administration
of President Johnson, the first chil-
dren's parties were held for his six
little grandchildren.

Conspicuous among the Christmas
presents received at the White house
are the splendid turkeys which come
to the president from rural admirers
all over the country. A Rhode Island
farmer has sent a huge turkey—the
finest to be had—for the White house
dinner each year for thirty years. For
these turkeys the farmer, Mr. Vose,
of Westerly, R. I., does not receive a
money value. He has, however, re-
ceived from each president, on the ar-
rival of the turkey, a note of thanks,
and these little letters from the execu-
tive mansion are greatly prized by
him.

The Mistletoe.

The mistletoe so generally used at
Christmas and New Year festivals is
regarded by many, even in our own
land, as a semi-sacred plant that pos-
sesses charms and confers privileges.

The ancient Britons believed their
gods were in the oaks, and when the
mistletoe was found growing upon an
oak, at the time the berries were ripe,
the Druids invited the people to a
great feast. The oldest Druid, robed
in white, climbed the trees where the
mistletoe grew, and, with the golden
sickle, cut it down while other priests
sang and prayed.

The evergreens with which our
houses are decked at Christmastime
are relics of the symbols by which
our heathen ancestors exhibited their
belief in the power of the sun to deck
the earth anew in green, and to cause
trees to bear fruit. High festivals
were held in December by northern
barbarians in honor of the sun.

The mistletoe figures in Scandina-
vian legend as having furnished the
material of the arrow with which Bal-
dur, the sun-god, was slain by the
blind god, Hoder.

The custom of kissing under the
mistletoe is of pagan origin also. The
Druids are supposed to have com-
menced it, and a Druid maiden who
failed to be kissed beneath the mistle-
toe was doomed to remain unmarried
during the following twelve-month.

Mistletoe berries are eaten by birds,
and through their agency the plant is
propagated, the birds wiping their
beaks against the tree barks upon
which they rest, as the seeds adhere
to the beaks.

The mistletoe is supposed to be the
golden bough which Aeneas made use
of to introduce himself to the Elysian
regions.

There are many beautiful legends
connected with the use of the mistle-
toe.

Christmas Cards.

The Christmas card, as we know it,
has an origin easily traceable, and it
is little more than half a century ago
that the first one was designed. The
artist who claimed to be its originator
and who was, at any rate, the first to
recognize its possibilities, was W. C.
T. Dobson, R. A., an Englishman,
who, when quite a young man, in 1844
was prompted at Christmastime to
make a little sketch symbolic of the
season's joys and festivities and to
send it to a friend. It seemed to give
such pleasure that, the next year, Mr.
Dobson determined to follow up the
idea on a larger scale, and by having
his card lithographed was enabled to
send copies to twenty-five or thirty
friends. The delight with which they
were received was so great that Mr.
Dobson was quick to perceive that he
had found a new source of pleasure
for Christmas.

Once started, the custom of sending
Christmas cards soon became well es-
tablished, but it took some decades to
make the custom universally popular,
though the difference between the out-
put then and now was no more
marked than the difference between
the cards of that day and those of
this. The simple floral design or ru-
ral scene, with its snow-clad land-
scape often designed by inferior art-
ists, which gave so much pleasure 25
years ago, has given place to the beau-
tifully and often expensively gotten-
up cards of the present day, many of
which are real gems of art. Five hun-
dred dollars, and even more, it is said,
has often been spent upon a set of
cards which are to be sold for a few
cents each.

Christmas-tide properly begins with
the evening of the 24th of December,
which is known as Christmas eve;
the festival continues until Epiphany,
on the 6th of January. Of the thirteen
days of Christmas-tide, the day of
honor—in fact the foremost of all fes-
tive days—is the 25th of December,
which is distinctly called Christmas
Day.

Holiday Giving.

Not all gifts will be given on the
eve or the day of Christmas. There
will be many belated presents, and for
many days the spirit of Christmas will
dominate the world. And in some
form, the custom should be observed
between friends. Give generously of
loving thoughts and evidences of good
will. Let the tongue, as well as the
hand, deal out the treasures of the
heart. Speak the kind word, do the
kind act. Live the professions of
your lips, and show forth to others
less favored "the light that is within
you."

Remember, too, that there are many
to whom even the semblance of the
Christmas spirit may be unknown.
There will be many, many places into

Drake's Palmetto Wine.

A trial bottle is sent prepaid, free of charge,
to every reader of this paper who has chronic
Stomach Trouble, Flatulency, Constipation,
Catarrh of the Mucous Membranes, Congestion
of Liver or Kidneys, or Inflammation of Bladder.
One dose a day relieves immediately, cures ab-
solutely, builds up the nervous system and pro-
motes a larger, purer and richer blood supply.
Seventy-five cents at Drug Stores for a large
bottle, usual dollar size, but every reader of
this paper who needs medicine will be supplied
with a trial bottle of Drake's Palmetto Wine,
free of charge, by writing for it to Drake For-
mula Company, Drake Building, Chicago, Ill.